

Mourners gather at JFK memorial on 25th anniversary of shooting

DALLAS (AP) — Hundreds of people came to the John F. Kennedy Memorial in downtown Dallas on Monday, as the city where he was killed 25 years ago prepared to mark the anniversary with private remembrances but no official ceremony.

Kennedy was traveling in a motorcade through downtown Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, when shots rang out across Dealey Plaza and he fell, mortally wounded. Today, a stone slab inscribed with Kennedy's name and surrounded by partial walls stands near the site as a memorial.

It was to this slab that visitors came Monday, the eve of the anniversary, to pay tribute to a president some of them were too young to remember.

Raul Miranda, 40, was in Dallas for a convention when he recalled the anniversary and decided to visit the memorial before going home to Los Angeles.

"It's something that I can tell my kids what happened," he said. "I'm going to tell them that 25 years ago this event changed the history of the United States, the history of the world."

Ernest Saucedo of Dallas hadn't even been born when the tragic events unfolded but visited the memorial anyway.

"I just made it my business to come by," said Mr. Saucedo, 20. "I understand he was a good president. I just feel I needed to come by. This is history."

On Sunday, 30 former Green Berets and 150 onlookers gathered at the memorial to remember Kennedy. The members of the U.S. Army Special Forces wore their berets — the ones Kennedy had authorized in 1961 — as they saluted four wreaths laid at the memorial.

At Parkland Memorial Hospital, where Kennedy was taken after being shot, a roundtable discussion was planned Tuesday with five doctors and nurses who were at the hospital when the president arrived.

Also Tuesday, Dallas-area painters, poets, performance artists and musicians planned a series of exhibits and live performances at the Texas Theater, where assassin Lee Harvey Oswald was apprehended only hours after the assassination.

At Dealey Plaza, a small American flag with a bouquet of flowers lay in

front of a plaque, about 200 yards from the memorial and across the street from the Texas School Book Depository Building, where authorities say Oswald fired from a sixth-floor window into Kennedy's motorcade.

The attention given to the 25th anniversary has aroused more interest than usual in the site, said Gary Mead, who drove one of several tour buses that stopped at the memorial Monday.

"They're very much aware of it," Mr. Mead said. "They don't want to miss this part of the tour."

Darrell Jordan, a Dallas native, was making his first visit to Dealey Plaza. He spent about an hour Monday touring the areas around the assassination site.

"I've been watching all of the specials the past several months and trying to formalize my own opinions" about what happened, he said. "I've been walking all over the place."

Mr. Jordan said he is disappointed the city and county planned no formal ceremonies to commemorate the anniversary but that he believed he understood why. "They (local officials) worked 25 years to try to get the nation

to forget it," he said.

The Dallas County Democratic Party, which had been in charge of the official observance, last marked the anniversary five years ago. Since then, it has sponsored ceremonies every May remembering Kennedy on his birthday.

"We got the impression that the family preferred we remember the happier moment celebrating his birth," said Sandy Kress county party chairman. "We think the family was right, and we feel good about what we're doing."

"I'm surprised there's not more of a ceremony," said Bob Boynton of St. Ignace, Mich. "I also don't think Dallas should share a guilt complex over this."

Jean Weir said she had been in Texas the month before Kennedy was assassinated and found it hard to believe the tragic news 25 years ago.

"The people were all so friendly," she said. "I loved the state. I was shocked to hear it happened there."

On Monday, Mrs. Weir returned with her husband to the assassination site.

"I actually wanted to come say a prayer," she said.